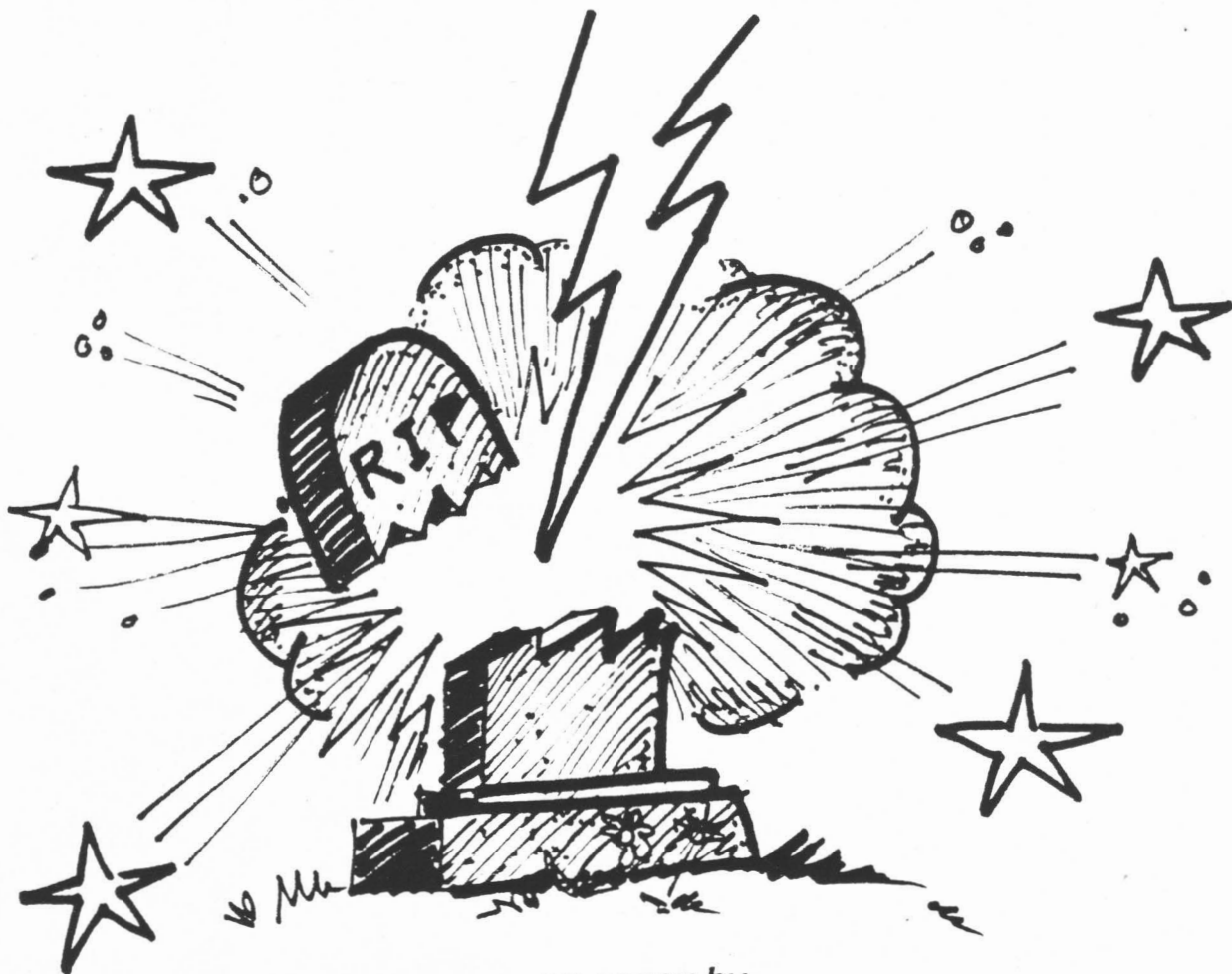


PUTTING NOVELTY BACK INTO VENTRILOQUISM!



an essay by
Steve Axtell, inVENTor

AXTELL EXPRESSIONS!

by Stephen B. Axtell

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AXTELL EXPRESSIONS!

272 Dalton street

Ventura, CA 93003

(805) 653*0364

There was a time in the early days when ventriloquism **was once truly a "NOVELTY"**. The word "novel" however means:

"Something new, different, unusual or innovative."

Over time most new ventriloquists began to copy the leaders, and the field as a whole lost it's novelty appeal. So the world began to think **if they had seen one vent, they had seen them all.**

We are now in a new period where ventriloquism is once again growing in popularity. We have the **novel approaches of daring vents** to thank for that.

The purpose of this essay is to create in you the **excitement** of taking risks and adding more novel ideas to your act which will not only benefit you greatly, but will help ventriloquism as a whole and keep it on the **cutting edge** of entertainment.

WHY ADD NOVELTY?

1.) **It's tough to be competitive** in this fast paced changing world doing an act everyone's seen before. We are competing with high tech mediums. Movies like **Star Wars** and television programming like **The Jim Henson Hour** are conditioning our audiences to expect something new. Still most of us are using standard vent concepts that are 5 or 10 or 20 years old. So to be successful we have to be constantly coming up with new ideas, we need to be innovative.

Ideas like organisms have a life cycle:

they are born

they develop

they reach maturity

they die

so we need to generate new ideas constantly.

2.) **It breaks down the stereotype** of the "PSYCHO VENT". Give the world a new **positive perspective** of the art. Break out of the old tux-dummy syndrome, or at least add to it.

3.) It will increase your worth as an entertainer. When news people are looking for a story they are attracted to what's unusual and unique. What differentiates **you** from all the rest? Adding good novel ideas to your act will **generate free publicity**. People want to see something new, we all love surprises. It will also **increase your bookings** and your audience will **remember you better**. If you now use good novel ideas you know this to be true.

4.) **It's fun!** When you add something new it **creates excitement** for you and your audience! **NOVEL IDEAS** do that to us.

Roger Von Eck, author of "WACK ON THE SIDE OF THE HEAD", says that "creative thinking is the sex of our mental lives!"

The process is as much fun as the results! Adding novelty to your act will be **FUN!**

How do you get started with creative vent thinking? I'm going to use the acronym "**N-O-V-E-L-T-Y**" to introduce you to my 7 steps for **PUTTING NOVELTY BACK INTO VENTRILOQUISM**.

N

- **NURTURE CREATIVE IDEAS**. Read books about creative thinking and idea generation. Learn to think creatively, make it a discipline. Try looking at things differently. Ask "**What if**" questions. What if my puppet was larger than me? What if I wore a bathrobe on stage instead of a tux? What if I had a wax figure that started to melt under the hot stage lights? What would he say? How would his voice change as he melted? **Start to view things differently**. Look at your act as if **you were in the audience**. What would you like to see? What would you really laugh at? What would surprise you? What would you remember and tell someone else about?

"Discovery consists at looking at the same thing as everyone else, and thinking something different."

We need to set aside time each day to nurture creative ideas. Not only will you be **gaining great ideas** but you'll be **exercising your brain** as well! Remember,

"a mind stretched by a good idea will never again return to it's original dimensions."

O

- **ORGANIZE YOUR IDEAS**. Keep an idea notebook. Collect good jokes, good ideas for puppets, costuming, props, funny 'situation comedy' ideas, and ideas for attracting free publicity.

I presently have a collection of 24 notebooks packed with my ideas and inventions. I was pretty proud of that until I heard about Steve Allen who had over 700 leather ring binders full of ideas.

Whenever you get an idea write it down. This accomplishes two things,

1.) You can look back and recall the idea freely without the worry of forgetting it.

2.) You strengthen the idea into concrete form on paper, and burn it into the subconscious mind, which will be refining it while you are unaware of it's work. Improvements and ideas will occur like "flashes of genius" when you continually write down your ideas.

✓ - **VACCINATE YOURSELF AGAINST THE "SAMENESS" DISEASE.** Beware the critic that would try to make you fit into a mold of what a vent should be like. Don't copy other's successful routines without modifying it with innovation of your own. Decide now what you're going to be: "Just another vent", or an "**inVENTive**" successful entertainer on the cutting edge of ventriloquism.

E We all have learned to follow the rules and color inside the lines and that has it's place in the beginning. But to be successful in the real world, we need to be novel, new and unique. **Other than the basic skills** of ventriloquism, like lip control, manipulation and misdirection we need to **unlearn and rethink** almost everything else. It's also very important encourage young and beginning vents to be innovative. Not just using someone else's good ideas but their own. If we don't encourage them they'll soon start to develop the symptoms of the dreaded "SAMENESS disease".

- **EVOLVE CONSTANTLY.**

If you have only one good routine that doesn't evolve, then you have **two major problems:**

- 1.) Being easily duplicated and,
- 2.) Running out of people willing to pay to see it.

You can change just a small part of what you do in your routines often. Always adding and deleting, always adjusting and improving.

Here are some ways your act can evolve:

Learn advanced vent skills and gimmicks that are new to you - like the distant voice, singing, blowing up a balloon, telephone voice, muffled voice, bubble-blowing, harmonica, echo. Then modify these techniques and create new skills.

Add non-vent skills to your act like magic, juggling, clowning, balloon animals, cartooning, playing an instrument etc. Or learn a new skill you've always wanted to do and make it a double win by adding it to your act. **This gives you variety and that sells!**

Add new puppets and props to your act - This gives your show a face-lift. New puppets spark new ideas for routines and since the puppet is the focus of your act- use a variety of them. If you want repeat bookings - **it's a must**. Look in the dealer catalogs and ask how could I use that in my act? How could I add something to that puppet or prop that would make it unique **or even better** for my needs?

Add new jokes. Remember that a joke cannot be copyrighted, so be sensitive to the author when you use a joke you've heard. Change it some and add to it - don't lift it verbatim. This will make you more of a "professional" and others will be more willing to share with you. Buy Gag files and joke books. **One good joke is worth the price of an entire book.**

Add situation comedy, like talking with a chicken who was just rejected by Col. Sanders! Or your hand getting stuck inside a puppet! **Unusual situations alone are sometimes so funny the jokes will write themselves.**

Add more non-verbal gestures and increase your skill at manipulation. Double takes, gasps, shyness - use body language. Mechanical animations and flexible rubber faces can give multiple expressions, but good simple exaggerated manipulation can also make anything appear expressive, even the proverbial sock.

- LOOK EVERYWHERE FOR NOVEL IDEAS

Watch TV with the idea of associating what you see with your act. Ask How can I use that? How could I change that to fit my puppet? Watch your mechanic as he works on your car for ideas, use every event in life for ideas.

A good way to get a novel idea is to combine unrelated subjects with ventriloquism. Example: Restaurants and vent, houseplants and vent, computers and vent. Go out collecting unrelated ideas and bring them into your routine.

I like to blend Magic with ventriloquism. That's how I came up with the Bird Arm Illusion. I combined magic, ventriloquism and cartooning to come up with the MAGIC DRAWING BOARD.

- TAKE ACTION ON YOUR IDEAS

You are no doubt sitting on some awesome idea that you've never done anything about. **DO IT NOW!** What's holding you back? Take a risk.

Nothing new has ever been achieved without risk.

Plan to take your first step today. **If you have an idea for a joke** you picked up on TV or at a convention, change it and adapt it to your show right away. **If you have a talent or skill** other than ventriloquism begin blending it with your act on your next booking. **If it's a new puppet idea**, talk to a craftsman right away about building it for you. Some puppet makers will make custom puppets just for you. I occasionally will create a good puppet concept for minimal cost in exchange for the rights to sell it in my line. Take action on your idea, most people don't!

- YOU ARE UNIQUE

Remember that no one else thinks just like you. You have an incredible brain capable of coming up with unique ideas and **you own it** lock, stock and barrel. Exploit that! Use your uniqueness to great advantage. Use your unique skills to enhance your act. Be fresh! Different! Don't worry about being copied. Even if others attempt to copy an idea of yours remember, they cannot duplicate your mind, which is the source.

Don't worry about how many pails of milk you spill as long as you still have the cow.

As long as they keep following you, you'll always be ahead of them.

You are unique and that's very valuable. Guard against loosing the only thing that's really yours.

Well I expect you are thinking creatively right now. Take some time right away to write down your ideas. Stretch the brain that God gave you - make it a part of every day. The benefits are awesome! It will not only help you in ventriloquism but in every other aspect of your life! Re-read this essay over whenever your ideas start to get stale and you'll become more successful by adding **NOVELTY TO YOUR VENTRILOQUISM!**

YOU CAN DO IT.
— Steve